

Switzerland FAM Trip

This was such a unique experience for me, and while I haven't been on other FAM trips to compare it to, I think it would be safe to say it was a unique FAM trip altogether. As the twelfth (and youngest) member of the North American team, I was quite proud of our finishing results. While I was only focusing on first place, we finished fourth, only 1 point behind Great Britain and overall 7 pts. behind the winning team- the Nordics. This was the best that the North American team has ever done in the past five years, giving us some sense of accomplishment. Over the next few days described below, you will see that we had jam-packed days, traveling quite a bit around the country and worked very hard to accumulate as many points as possible! Happy reading.

Day One

I flew Swiss Air from LAX direct to Zurich- and upon arrival was greeted by a Zurich Airport VIP Services Rep directly off the plane. She walked me straight through customs and immigration to a taxi driver who also had a sign with my name on it. Oddly enough however, I was left to pay the tab. (In hindsight could have easily avoided as Zurich has incredible public transportation... the train ends directly in the airport). Night one was hosted at the beautiful Park Hyatt Hotel- very contemporary, autumn color palette and recently built in 2004. (Internet rates range from \$400-\$650!).

(www.zurich.park.hyatt.ch) Since I was the last one to arrive I missed the Zurich city tour- including the spectacular Dolder Grand Hotel, which the group could not stop talking about at dinner. Their website does give a little indication of how beautiful the property is: www.thedoldergrand.com.

Dinner that night was at the Guildhouse zur Waag (www.zunftthaus-zur-waag.ch)



As you can see above, this wonderful venue has multi levels and beautiful stained glass windows. The rooms can accommodate parties of 12, 60 or 120 guests. Dinner was typical Swiss dish- veal with Rosti. There was a British man (friend of the owner) who was jovially playing the piano one floor up and as we were leaving, you could still hear his music coming through the windows outside. Since we were close enough to the hotel, several of us passed on the shuttle and walked back.

Day Two



The first of many early mornings began with breakfast on a boat. As the official kickoff to the Swiss Meeting Trophy, the North American team wore our matching bright red t-shirts. Funny enough however the tourism



board provided bright red vests for all of us to wear during the competition. Our 'stand-out' appearance quickly blended in with the other teams. Along with the vest we also received our 'rally books'. The competition was on. We took a boat across the lake to the train station. Once we were boarded, we quickly divided up the pages of the rally book and started working on the questions, crossword puzzle and various other tasks.



We arrived in Luzerne and went around town following our rally book instructions. Shot an apple off of a wooden stick (W. Tell style), shopped for a swiss invention (that wasn't chocolate or a watch) and listened to music trying to guess who the artist

was. (Luzerne is known for its music festivals). Quick stop at the lake for a paddleboat competition. We were ahead with Belgium and Germany until the French got turned backwards and cut us off around the turn. (our boat is on the right... and I'm paddling away!). After our race, we climbed into rental cars and drove through the countryside to Ballenberg. I rode with three Canadians who all trusted me behind the wheel in a convertible Audi, not bad! ☺ The scenery was stunning...





We arrived in Ballenberg and our next stop was at a living museum. Our tasks at hand included everything from identifying old tools, to moving this shoe, identifying the reasons behind old swiss farming practices, hitting a nail into a stump in the least amount of hits, etc. (Photo: Our fearless leader Caroline... moving the shoe. You had to use a stick and move it from one side up near your feet to the other side without it touching the ground... three of us did this and successfully! And I hit the nail in three strikesMore points for us). A buffet lunch was served in this old open barn. There



were goats snacking away on straw right next to us.

Our last stop for the day was in Interlaken. We had a rock tossing contest- three team members toss a 50lb. rock as far as they could and we had a handful of questions left to answer. That night we checked into the Victoria Jungfrau Palace (www.victoria-junfrau.ch- A Leading Hotel of the World). Noting this wasn't anyone's favorite hotel, as a lot of the rooms were not renovated. Many of my fellow team members were disappointed in the lack of A/C as well. Dinner that night was at Restaurant Spycher, where we had fondue- a treat! (www.casino-kursaal.ch/restaurants/spycher) Entertainment for that night was one of those ricola horns and a guitarist. (We were in 4th place after day one but we kept our high energy!)

Day



Three



Unfortunately for us, our trip by cable car that morning to the top of

Schilthorn was interfered by massive fog and we were not able to see the view of the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau mountain peaks. (www.schilthorn.ch). At the top of the lookout point, we had several tasks and questions to answer at hand, including this stacking of the cows contest. We also had someone on our team compete to try and hold the longest note on the ricolón horn and three of us

raced to build a tent for time. (I just tried the horn for fun).

We left Schilthorn by a very fancy train car- <http://groups.sbb.ch/Extrazuege-Extrawagen.aspx> / www.ticino.ch) and had a delicious lunch as well as a blind wine tasting (also part of the rally book challenge... we had to identify which wine was a



blend and which was barrel-aged).



Arriving in Basel, we had completed most of the questions in our rally book. (They were not easy questions!) Running around the town, we had to identify the 8 ingredients in this traditional swiss cookie biscuit- Lackerli, as well as paint a traditional Basel festival mask and even put one of our team members on a segway to ride through a challenge course. (I painted but one of the other ladies was dying to ride the segway ☺)



Our competition ended that day and we headed to the farewell dinner and awards with high hopes at the Restaurant Gare du Nord (www.garedunord.ch). Some of the other teams dressed up in theme, everyone was full of camaraderie and excitement. Following dinner,



we had the awards ceremony and 'dancing'. Note: Europeans love OLD



American classics- and I'm not referring to MJ and Queen... I'm talking about music from the 30's 40's and 50's. =x One of the ladies from Chicago and I were cracking up about this the whole night. We would request something somewhat modern, say Beyonce, and the dance floor would somewhat standstill. As soon as the Twist comes on, the floor was bustling!

With a fourth place finish, the North American team finished with our heads held high... and our catch phrase throughout the entire trip is displayed here in this photo:



Day Four

Even though our competition reached an end, our trip had one last stop. That morning we left for Lausanne, and I truly mean this when I say that the best was saved for last. Upon arrival, we took a tour of our hotel- the lovely Beau-Rivage Palace (www.brp.ch). Superbly situated in the residential area of Lausanne on the shores of Lake Geneva, this hotel is surrounded by 10 acres of private gardens and breath-taking views of the Swiss Alps in the background. Also a part of the Leading Hotels of the World, this property truly lived up to its name. With lavishly grand ballrooms and meeting space, the hotel carries a longstanding history of having dignitaries choose this property. Only recently was the Dali Lama staying at the Beau Rivage!



Next to the hotel is the official Olympic Museum, which can also be used for event space. We had lunch upstairs on the terrace before taking a quick city tour.



(This is the record height for high jump!)

Lausanne is known for hosting many sporting activities and festivals. Lucky for us that day there was the championship Triathlon taking place. You can only imagine how fun it was for me to watch this race take place 😊. It was dangerous however to try and cross any part of the biking or running track to get to our cruise but we somehow



managed.

This cruise was completely renovated in its traditional style, sailing the blue waters of Lake Geneva. We got off at a small, typical Swiss village called Lutry. The quaint town had an old train that took us up to the vineyards where we stopped for a quick wine tasting overlooking an incredible view of the lake. The winery we



stopped at can host a small private dinner for up to 50 ppl, with space outdoors for a cocktail reception as well. It has been run by the same family for many generations, with the grapes growing nearby and the wine produced right there on property. Domaine du Daley Winery (www.daley.ch)

To conclude our visit in Lausanne, we had dinner on property at the Beau Rivage café. There we bought Caroline, our Swiss Tourism Board rep a gift from the spa and thanked her for her generosity of time and kindness. As a group, we grew quite close over those few days and have already been in touch several times since then. While our days in Switzerland were limited, our memories of the time spent together will remain vibrant and meaningful.

